

Examiner's Amendment

1. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Bruce Sunstein on September 10, 2008.

The listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listings of claims:

1. (Currently Amended) A computer implemented method for providing through a computer network to business management a plan for implementing a user's suggestion for business improvement, the method comprising:

in a first computer process, causing presentation ~~presenting~~ to a user seeking to submit a suggestion for business improvement, a series of two or more templates for entering a structured response on a terminal device, wherein one of the templates presented to the user allows the user to characterize the type of suggestion as falling into at least one of a plurality of categories selected from a group of cost saving, revenue generation, quality improvement, safety improvement, customer service improvement, policy change and advertising or corporate slogan;

receiving over a computer network the structured response, entered into the two or more templates from the user, wherein the structured response includes a characterization of the type of suggestion entered into one or more templates by the user and a server logically selects at least one of the templates presented to the user according to the type of suggestion characterized by the user; and

in a second computer process, determining the network routing of data from the

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structured response to business management based upon entries of the response in one or more templates;

~~wherein the structured response includes a characterization of the type of suggestion entered into one or more templates by the user and a server logically selects at least one of the templates presented to the user according to the type of suggestion characterized by the user.~~

2. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein the server logically selects ~~each~~ a plurality of templates subsequent to a first template based upon data entered by the user in one or more templates.
3. (Cancelled)
4. (Cancelled)
5. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 ~~2~~, wherein at least one ~~the~~ template ~~for the selected type of proposal~~ provides for entry of cost savings information.
6. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 ~~2~~, wherein at least one ~~the~~ template ~~for the selected type of proposal~~ provides for access to a database containing cost information.
7. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 ~~2~~ wherein a template is provided based upon a selected department of the business.
8. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 ~~2~~ wherein a financial template is provided based upon the type of suggestion characterized ~~proposal selected~~.
9. (Original) The method according to claim 8, further comprising calculating a financial benefit based upon submissions in the financial template.
10. (Original) The method according to claim 9 further comprising obtaining financial data requested from the network.
11. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 10 wherein access to financial data is controlled through a user's log-in for the computer network.
12. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 10 wherein if no financial data is available in a database associated with the network and the user enters financial data in a template the method further comprises:

adding the financial data to the ~~cost~~ database for a subsequent user suggestion.

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13. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein determining the network routing is dependent in part on a business group that is selected on a template by the user.

14. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein determining the network routing is dependent in part on a user's response to whether the suggestion has a financial benefit.

15. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1 wherein determining the network routing is dependent in part on a selected department affected by the user suggestion.

16. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1 wherein determining the network routing is dependent in part on whether the user indicates that the suggestion is a team suggestion.

17. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1, wherein determining the network routing is dependent in part on the suggestion characterized as an idea type selected by the user ~~on a template~~.

18. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 ~~2~~, wherein a template provides a user with selectable items having associated financial information.

19. (Original) The method according to claim 18, wherein a processor determines the net financial impact based upon the one or more selectable items selected.

20. (Original) The method according to claim 19, wherein the processor obtains financial information from a business database based upon the selected selectable items.

21. (Original) The method according to claim 18 wherein an employee may add one or more financial impact items and request financial information from the business database about the financial impact items.

22. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 ~~2~~, further comprising receiving information from a template at a processor wherein the information contains financial data about a financial impact item and adding the financial data about the financial impact item to a business database.

23. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 ~~2~~, wherein a template is provided which allows a user to enter one or more potential implementers of the

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employee suggestion.

24. (Original) The method according to claim 23, wherein determining the network routing is dependent in part upon the one or more potential implementers selected.

25. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, wherein determining the network routing is dependent in part upon a deadline selected by the user.

26. (Currently Amended) The method according to claim 1 wherein determining the network routing is dependent in part upon information about the user submitting the suggestion idea.

27. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 26, wherein the user is an employee and such information may include the department of the business that the employee works in.

28. (Original) The method according to claim 1, further comprising:
receiving over a network a structured reply to the structured response from one or more members of business management.

29. (Original) The method according to claim 28, wherein the structured reply is based upon response by business management to one or more templates.

30. (Original) The method according to claim 28, wherein business management is sent cost information from a cost database associated with a processor.

31. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 28, wherein receipt of the structured reply causes a processor to contact the user submitting the structured suggestion.

32. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 31, wherein the processor contacts the user via e-mail.

33. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 28, wherein the processor routes a new template to the user requesting more information about the employee suggestion in response to the structured reply.

34. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, further comprising:
maintaining a user suggestion log in memory associated with the processor.

35. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 34, wherein the user

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suggestion log contains information entered by the user on a series of templates, information regarding routing of the user suggestion and status of the user suggestion.

36. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1 2, wherein a template is provided to the user for entering information regarding implementation of the user suggestion.

37. (Original) The method according to claim 36, wherein the information regarding implementation includes identification of possible implementers.

38. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 37, further comprising: after receiving information from business management indicating acceptance of the user suggestion, sending via the computer network information about the user suggestion to the possible implementers.

39. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 1, if a deadline for response to the user suggestion expires, sending a reminder via the computer network to the business management that received the user suggestion.

40. (Original) The method according to claim 1, wherein determining network routing is based in part on workload of the business management.

41. (Previously Presented) The method according to claim 34, upon request by the employee submitting the employee suggestion, providing a displayable version of the user suggestion log via the computer network to a computer associated with the user submitting the suggestion.

42-45. (Cancelled)

46. (Currently Amended) A computer program product comprising a computer readable storage medium having computer readable code thereon for providing to business management a plan for implementing a user's suggestion, the computer readable code comprising:

computer code for presenting to a user seeking to submit a suggestion for business improvement, a series of two or more templates for entering a structured response, wherein at least one of the templates contains a field for selecting the type of suggestion from the group of cost saving, revenue generation, quality improvement, safety improvement, customer service improvement, policy change and advertising or corporate

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slogan;

computer code for obtaining over a computer network the structured response, entered into the two or more templates, from the user, wherein the structured response includes a characterization of the type of suggestion entered into one or more templates by the user and at least one of the templates presented to the user is selected according to the type of suggestion characterized by the user;

computer code for determining network routing of data from the structured response to business management based upon entries of the response in one or more templates ~~wherein the structured response includes a characterization of the type of suggestion entered into one or more templates by the user and at least one of the templates presented to the user is selected according to the type of suggestion characterized by the user.~~

47. (Currently Amended) The computer program product according to claim 46, further comprising:

computer code for selecting additional templates to develop the structured response wherein, a plurality of at least one templates is selected based upon information entered by the user within at least one prior template.

48. (Cancelled)

49. (Cancelled)

50. (Currently Amended) The computer program product according to claim ~~46~~ 49, wherein ~~the~~ at least one template ~~for the selected type of proposal~~ provides for entry of cost savings information.

51. (Currently Amended) The computer program product according to claim ~~46~~ 49, wherein at least one of the templates provides for access to a database containing cost information.

52. (Currently Amended) The computer program product according to claim ~~46~~ 47 wherein a template is chosen based upon a selected department of the business.

53. (Currently Amended) The computer program product according to claim ~~46~~ 47 wherein a financial template is provided based upon the type of suggestion characterized proposal selected.

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54. (Original) The computer program product according to claim 53, further comprising computer code for calculating a financial benefit based upon one or more transmitted submissions from the financial template.

55. (Currently Amended) The computer program product according to claim ~~46~~ 47 further comprising: computer code for obtaining financial data requested from the network.

56. (Original) The computer program product according to claim 55 wherein access to financial data is controlled through an employee's log-in for the computer network.

57. (Currently Amended) The computer program product according to claim 56 wherein if no financial data is available in a database associated with the network and the user enters financial data in a template the computer program product further comprises: computer code for adding the financial data to the ~~cost~~ database for a subsequent user suggestion.

58. (Previously Presented) The computer program product according to claim 46, wherein in the computer code for determining the network routing, the network routing is determined in part on a business group that is selected on a template by the user.

59. (Previously Presented) The computer program product according to claim 46, wherein in the computer code for determining the network routing, the network routing is dependent in part on a user's response to whether the suggestion has a financial benefit.

60. (Previously Presented) The computer program product according to claim 46, wherein in the computer code for determining the network routing, the network routing is dependent in part on a selected department affected by the user suggestion.

61. (Previously Presented) The computer program product according to claim 46, wherein in the computer code for determining the network routing, the network routing is dependent in part on whether the user indicates that the suggestion is a team suggestion.

62. (Currently Amended) The computer program product according to claim 46, wherein in the computer code for determining the network routing, the network routing is dependent in part on the suggestion characterized as an idea type selected by the user ~~on a template~~.

63. (Currently Amended) The computer program product according to claim ~~46~~ 47,

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wherein a template provides the user with selectable items having associated financial information.

64. (Original) The computer program product according to claim 63, having computer code for determining the net financial impact based upon the one or more selected selectable items having associated financial information.

65. (Original) The computer program product according to claim 64, further comprising computer code for obtaining financial information from a cost database based upon the selected selectable items.

66. (Original) The computer program product according to claim 65 further comprising computer code for sending a request for financial information about one or more financial impact items to one or more sources.

67. (Currently Amended) The computer program product according to claim ~~46~~ 47, further comprising: computer code for receiving information from a template wherein the information contains financial data about a financial impact item; and computer code for adding the financial data about the financial impact item to a cost database.

68. (Currently Amended) The computer program product according to claim ~~46~~ 47, wherein a template is provided which allows the user to enter one or more potential implementers of the employee suggestion.

69. (Original) The computer program product according to claim 68, wherein the computer code for determining the network routing is dependent in part upon the one or more potential implementers selected.

70. (Currently Amended) The computer program product according to claim ~~46~~ 47, wherein the computer code for determining the network routing is dependent in part upon a deadline selected by the user.

71. (Currently Amended) The computer program product according to claim ~~46~~, 47 wherein the user is an employee of the business and the computer code for determining the network routing is dependent in part upon information about the employee submitting the suggestion.

72. (Original) The computer program product according to claim 71, wherein such

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information may include the department of the business that the employee works in.

73. (Currently Amended) The computer program product according to claim 46 47, further comprising: computer code for receiving over a network a structured reply to the structured response from one or more members of business management.

74. (Original) The computer program product according to claim 73, wherein the structured reply is based upon response by business management to one or more templates.

75. (Original) The computer program product according to claim 73, further comprising computer code for sending business management cost information from a cost database.

76. (Previously Presented) The computer program product according to claim 73, further comprising computer code for sending a message to the user submitting the structured suggestion upon receipt of the structured reply.

77. (Original) The computer program product according to claim 75, further comprising code for sending the message via electronic mail.

78. (Previously Presented) The computer program product according to claim 73, further comprising computer code for routing a new template to the user requesting more information about the user suggestion in response to the structured reply.

79. (Previously Presented) The computer program product according to claim 46, further comprising:

maintaining a user suggestion log in memory.

80. (Previously Presented) The computer program product according to claim 79, wherein the employee suggestion log contains information entered by the user on a series of templates, information regarding routing of the user suggestion and status of the user suggestion.

81. (Currently Amended) The computer program product according to claim 46 47, further comprising computer code for providing a template to the user for entering information regarding implementation of the employee suggestion.

82. (Original) The computer program product according to claim 81, wherein the information regarding implementation includes identification of possible implementers.

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83. (Previously Presented) The computer program product according to claim 82, further comprising: computer code for sending via the computer network information about the user suggestion to the possible implementers, after receiving information from business management indicating acceptance of the user suggestion.

84. (Previously Presented) The computer program product according to claim 46, further comprising:

computer code for sending a reminder via the computer network to the business management that received the user suggestion if a deadline for response to the user suggestion expires.

85. (Original) The computer program product according to claim 46, wherein network routing is based in part on workload of the business management.

86. (Previously Presented) The computer program product according to claim 79, further comprising:

computer code for providing a displayable version of the user suggestion log via the computer network, upon receipt of a request by the user submitting the employee suggestion.

87-90. (Cancelled)

91. (Currently Amended) A method for directing a computerized idea submission in a business to appropriate business managers for improving the business, the method comprising:

in a first computer process, causing presentation of ~~providing~~ a plurality of templates to a user, wherein the templates require one or more responses, wherein one of the templates presented to the user allows the user to characterize the type of idea as falling into at least one of a plurality of categories selected from a group of cost saving, revenue generation, quality improvement, safety improvement, customer service improvement, policy change and advertising or corporate slogan;

in a second computer process, receiving a completed set of templates from the user creating a structured idea;

in a third computer process, determining the routing of the structured idea to an appropriate business manager based at least in part upon the one or more responses;

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in a fourth computer process, providing an evaluation template to the appropriate business manager based upon the determined routing;

in a fifth computer process, receiving a completed evaluation template from the appropriate business manager; and

in a sixth computer process, routing the idea to an implementer if the idea is approved, wherein the routing is determined in part on the completed evaluation template.

92. (Cancelled)

93. (Cancelled)

Allowable Subject Matter

2. Claims 1-2, 5-41, 46-47, 50-86 and 91 are allowed.

Reasons for Allowance

3. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance:

The closest prior art is to D'Alessandro (U.S. Patent No. 6,556,974) in view of Tso (US Patent No. 6,085,201). The combination of D'Alessandro and Tso fails to teach or suggest wherein the structured response includes a characterization of the type of suggestion entered into one or more templates by the user and a server logically selects at least one of the templates presented to the user according to the type of suggestion characterized by the user, and in a second computer process, determining the network routing of data from the structured response to business management based upon entries of the response in one or more templates, as recited in independent claim 1.

The closest prior art is to D'Alessandro (U.S. Patent No. 6,556,974) in view of Tso (US Patent No. 6,085,201). The combination of D'Alessandro and Tso fails to teach or suggest wherein at least one of the templates contains a field for selecting the type of suggestion from the group of cost saving, revenue generation, quality improvement, safety improvement, customer service improvement, policy change and advertising or corporate slogan, and computer code for determining network routing of data from the

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structured response to business management based upon entries of the response in one or more templates, as recited in independent claim 46.

The closest prior art is to D'Alessandro (U.S. Patent No. 6,556,974) in view of Tso (US Patent No. 6,085,201). The combination of D'Alessandro and Tso fails to teach or suggest wherein one of the templates presented to the user allows the user to characterize the type of idea as falling into at least one of a plurality of categories selected from a group of cost saving, revenue generation, quality improvement, safety improvement, customer service improvement, policy change and advertising or corporate slogan and in a third computer process, determining the routing of the structured idea to an appropriate business manager based at least in part upon the one or more responses, as recited in independent claim 91.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Conclusion

4. Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Romain Jeanty whose telephone number is (571)272-6732. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon-Thurs 7:30 am to 6:00 pm.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Beth Boswell can be reached on (571) 272-6737. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/RJ/

September 15, 2008

/Romain Jeanty/
Primary Examiner,
Art Unit 3623